STRICTURES

ON THE

NEW POLITICAL TENETS

OF THE

Rt. Hon. EDMUND BURKE,

Illuſtrated by Analogy between his different Sentiments on the

AMERICAN and FRENCH REVOLUTIONS;

TOGETHER WITH

Obſervations on particular Parts of his laſt Letter

TO A MEMBER OF THE

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY,

AND

AN APPEAL FROM THE OLD

TO THE

NEW WHIGS.

By CHARLES PIGOTT, Esq.

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ERRATA.

Page 28. Second line from the bottom, *for* caſhiers, *read* cahiers.
29. Ninth line in the Note, *for* rependit, *read* repondit.
31.. Line ſixth, for *when*, *read* that.
Do. Line ſeventh, after and *read* of this.
32. Line third, *for* which has, *read* violence has in him.
48. Second line from the bottom, for *bourreano*, read *bourreaus*.
51. Line ſecond, *for* principal authority, *read* judicial and legiſlative power.

PREFACE.

THE chief deſign of the follow ſheets is to explore the inconſiſtency of one who was long regarded as the moſt zealous friend of liberty. A deſerter from an honourable cauſe, to which he owed all his fame and popularity, ſhould receive the wages of his apoſtacy. It is neceſſary for the people to diſtinguiſh between their real friends, and thoſe who are only friends to themſelves.

The late Mr. Pitt, from the inſtant he became the penſioned earl of Chatham, forfeited all his true rank and genuine ſplendour of character, but it did not appear in ſacrificing to his vanity, or perhaps, in ſome degree to his neceſſities and parental affection, that he abandoned his other more important principles. Time is yet to develope the real motive of Mr. Burke's verſatility.

Exhauſted

Exhauſted by the inceſſant toil of fruitleſs oppoſition, and hopeleſs of ſucceſs from the preſent appearance of things under the ſame ſtandard, he ſeems at once to relinquiſh every idea of friendſhip and party attachment; a principle on which, perhaps, he has heretofore laid too much ſtreſs, and to adopt the opinions of men whom he had long ſyſtematically oppoſed, but under whoſe influence he is now moſt likely to receive titles and compenſations. Short ſighted, however, are his views; he may have felt the pulſe of the country at this juncture, and imagine it to beat in uniſon with his own, but truth muſt finally prevail, and the ſacred flame of liberty once kindled, its progreſs will be irreſiſtible.

When a perſon addreſſes the public, he muſt be ſuppoſed to reſpect its opinion, and from the manner in which I now mention Mr. Fox, the ſame charge of inconſiſtency may by ſome be alledged againſt me, that is in fact ſo peculiarly applicable to Mr. Burke; but I am free from the imputation. Warm in my temper, I might perhaps once expreſs myſelf freely on a point where the man whom I eſteemed and reſpected beyond all others, appeared to act inconſiſtently with his profeſſions, and in a manner that tended to deſtroy his pretenſions, at a time when it was abſolutely

abſolutely neceſſary for him to be at the head of public affairs. My animadverſions were pointed againſt a particular event, and meaſures immediately connected with that event*, but I always felt, and ſtill preſerve, the utmoſt reſpect for the perſonal and political character of Mr. Fox. He deſerves too well of his country in general to be affected by the cenſure of any individual, and I cannot juſtly be charged with inconſiſtency, in arraigning particular tranſactions, which certainly had not the approbation, however they might find the ſupport, of his own moſt partial and zealous adherents.

From a regard for public opinion, (however unfaſhionable), I have ſaid thus much in my own behalf, at the ſame time that I wiſh to inveſtigate the real motives of a man, once high in popular eſtimation, and whoſe deſertion merits far more ſeverity than it has hitherto received. Every trader in politics ſhould be ſcouted. Facts are the only criterion whereby men can with certainty pronounce; and I dedicate the following pages, (diveſted of all ſophiſtry), to the public, and ſubmit them to their candid deciſion.

* The Coalition.

STRICTURES, &c.

MR. BURKE's firſt pamphlet concerning French affairs had been ſo fully anſwered, and its fallacy ſo glaringly expoſed, that it might have been expected to deter him from further attempts, but conviction is not always the reſult of argument, and the language he applies to others, is ſtrictly appropriate to himſelf. That "Men ſometimes make a point of honour not to be diſabuſed, and had rather commit a hundred errors than confeſs one *". This ſurely is his own caſe, for never did man exerciſe in the beſt of cauſes, a more peremptory, dictatorial tone than he has arrogated in the very worſt; in one, which militates againſt the moſt ſacred and inviolable of all principles, however prophanely derided by him, THE RIGHTS OF MAN.

* Vide Mr. Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

The perverſion of great abilities is always matter of lamentation, and when there is reaſon to apprehend a corrupt deſertion of principle, the evil becomes more dangerous. The eloquent and intrepid champion of freedom, quitting the colours under which he had been long diſtinguiſhed, at a criſis when the general intereſts of humanity demanded all his zeal and all his talents, preſents a terrible example of political depravity; and it is melancholy to obſerve, that the ſame faſcinating eloquence which was ſo ſucceſsfully diſplayed in the cauſe of American independence, ſhould be now engaged in the moſt flagitious attempt to re-eſtabliſh the conquered deſpotiſm of France;—in inſtigating rebellion againſt a lawful government that the ſovereign himſelf had ſolemnly recognized, and to which he had moſt religiouſly *ſworn* fidelity and protection. Surely that mind muſt have undergone a ſtrange revolution, or Mr. Burke was never regulated by any ſolid, fixed principle, that he can now invite all the powers of Europe to make head againſt

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the legal eſtabliſhment of a great nation, and to deluge it with oceans of blood, in the vain effort to reſtore that ſyſtem of tyranny, which it is the glory of philoſophy and patriotiſm to have deſtroyed.

It cannot be pretended that Great-Britain ever exerciſed an hundredth part of the oppreſſion and cruelty over her coloniſts, which France uſurped over her natural ſubjects; yet Mr. Burke did not object to the entire emancipation of America from the authority of this country. It was not merely a partial reform of the original evils complained of, that he contended for: No; he proceeded regularly with them. He vindicated the injured rights of humanity, and even when the primary object of contention was abandoned by our government, he certainly acquieſced in their further perſeverance; and, if I am not egregiouſly miſtaken, abſolutely aſſerted their claim to independence, and a right to form a conſtitution of their own; nevertheleſs, he now maintains the prerogative of Nations to rule over their colonies.

Mr. Burke, in his laſt publication, labours with amazing force and confidence to repel the charge of inconſiſtency in this particular caſe. He challenges the cloſeſt and ſevereſt criticiſm into his book, and defies the moſt rigid, prejudiced cenſor to diſcover a ſingle ſentence where he is at variance with any of his former opinions. He tells us that, "It is on the virtue of "conſiſtency he values himſelf the moſt, "and ſtrip him of that, you will leave him naked indeed *." Confidence often proves of infinite ſervice to an indifferent cauſe: It confounds the ignorant, and ſometimes operates as a prejudice on the cleareſt and moſt impartial underſtanding. Knowing the predicament in which he ſtood, he was doubtleſs too guarded to convict himſelf by any raſh or haſty expreſſion in that elaborate performance; but I would aſk him generally, without entering into the minute diſcuſſion which he requires, how, acquieſcing as he certainly did, in the

* Vide "The Appeal from the New to the old "Whigs."

Americans

Americans ſhaking off the yoke of dependence on this country, and forming a conſtitution of their own, he can now, (all ſophiſtry apart), agreeably with the plain maxims of common ſenſe and conſiſtency, vindicate himſelf in having voluntarily ſtood forth the moſt vehement unprovoked aſſailant of the late revolution in France? The Americans, happy in their firſt effort of reſiſtance, which was followed up by more efficient and brilliant advantages, adhered to the true character of human nature; elated by ſucceſs, and confident in the honour and integrity of their cauſe, they did not then chuſe to accept thoſe conceſſions, which from intereſt and diſappointment, (evidently not from juſtice or humanity), were offered to them. They begun to know their own conſequence and to feel their own power. Victory naturally increaſed their reſources; it procured them alliances and protection, and thence, aided by their own firmneſs and virtue, they were enabled to oppoſe with effect the arms of Great-Britain, and finally to eſtabliſh a free and independent

empire, which fixes a new, and I truſt a happier æra in the annals of mankind. They extorted by force the ineſtimable bleſſings of freedom and independence, and could not then forget the inſolence and contempt with which the Britiſh government had formerly treated their moſt dutiful addreſſes and petitions.

Mr. Burke has lately diſcovered a difference of opinion (notwithſtanding the cordiality and affection with which at that time they apparently acted together) between Mr. Fox and himſelf as to the original cauſe of the American war; the former having declared, "That the Ame-"ricans rebelled, becauſe they had not li-"berty enough *." Whereas, he aſcribes their reſiſtance to a pure deſire of remaining exactly as they were, previous to the troubles, and aſſerts, that he ſhould have acted very differently, had he conceived their views to have extended further. How far this aſſertion agrees with the general

* Vide "The Appeal from the New to the Old "Whigs." Page 36.

tenor

tenor of his conduct during the progreſs of that war, muſt depend on facts too recent to be yet forgotten. He labours however to ſupport his aſſertion by the powerful authority of Dr. Franklin's coincidence in ſimilar ſentiments. It is impoſſible at this time to conceive the motives of that venerable philoſopher and patriot for holding forth ſuch doctrines in any private converſation with Mr. Burke; but certain it is, that they were moſt diametrically oppoſite to the opinions he expreſſed, and univerſally propagated both on his return to America, and during the long period of his arduous and critical embaſſy in France. He labours alſo to juſtify himſelf by an appeal to the ſecond conciliatory propoſition which he moved in 1776, and to prove from thence, that the charge of their aſpiring to independence was falſe*. It does not appear that his conciliatory propoſitions had any tendency to aſcertain the original intentions of that people, or, that the nine ſeveral heads of *preſumption* which he endeavoured to deduce from thence, were any

* Vide The Appeal.

ways explanatory of them; much leſs did they infer any reluctance on his part, to the final accompliſhment of the great object they acquired. However, after all, it is wholly immaterial what were the original motives of the Americans; they have no relation whatever with the charge to which he certainly is liable on this occaſion. If Mr. Burke really diſapproved their further perſeverance in hoſtility, when conceſſions had been granted by Great-Britain, far beyond what in the firſt inſtance they affected to require: If, when he perceived their ultimate object to be independence, he had then at once, in the face of his country, like the earl of Chatham, manfully diſavowed his ſanction to the meaſure, the charge of inconſiſtency in the preſent caſe, would have been ill ſupported; but Mr. Burke did not then preach his favourite revived doctrine of non-reſiſtance: he then could weep over the death of Montgomery, and rejoice in the victories of Waſhington; and certainly at that time, felt it no diſgrace to be thought, what till now he ever

was

was thought, even by thoſe moſt in habits of confidence and friendſhip with him, the ſincere and zealous advocate of their liberty and independence.

The French nation, long the victims, the eaſy, unreſiſting victims of a ferocious deſpotiſm, diſtributed through the various channels of numberleſs departments, where every petty officer was armed with power, which he ſeldom failed to abuſe, from a long ſeries of events brought on by the enormities whence originated their ſufferings, at length acquired the means of avenging themſelves. In ſuch a criſis, a liberal mind ſhould have allowed ſome indulgence for the effervescencies of a people burſting the chains of tyranny, and a philoſopher ought ſurely to have waited the iſſue with patience, ere he preſumed definitely to decide againſt them. They ſeized the power and delegated the exerciſe of it to other hands. The monarchy however was not aboliſhed; it was reduced only to its proper ſphere. Inſtead of being exalted above, it was rendered ſubordinate to the laws; ſome intervening calamities, encouraged

raged and brought on by the deſperate cabals of the diſaffected party, conſequently enſued; but when, by a breach of faith, which, had it ſucceeded, would have laid waſte the country and deluged it in blood, the king fled and was afterwards conducted back to Paris, a ſpectacle of ſcorn and deriſion to an abuſed, exaſperated people; ſtill they did not retaliate thoſe injuries they had received; no violence was offered; and while he was trembling under the juſteſt apprehenſions for a life he had forfeited by his perfidy and deſertion, the National Aſſembly delivered him from his terrors, decreed his perſon ſacred, and at the ſame time reſtored to him his crown, with an immenſe annual revenue of eleven hundred thouſand pounds, on condition of his accepting the conſtitution with the terms decreed.

He has *ſolemnly* accepted it, and a general amneſty has ſucceeded *.

Theſe are facts. Mr. Burke deals only in fiction, but how far this act of magnan-

* We may look back in vain to the years 1715 and 1745 for ſimilar examples of mercy and generoſity.

imity

imity was politic or juſt, the future conduct of the man will beſt evince.

Although averſe to innovation, Mr. Burke ſtill admits the vices of their ancient government; he allows the wretched condition of the people under that government, and does not attempt to deny the neceſſity of *Reformation*: but did he ever then, when the Baſtile and every engine of deſpotiſm was in conſtant uſe, did he ever then undertake to plead the injured rights of men? No; but when he vainly imagined the right of kings was invaded, then his ſenſibility took the alarm; his indignation knew no bounds, and he now indulges an exceſſive grief for the exaggerated ſufferings of a ſingle deſpot *; whilſt he withheld

* Mr. Burke never of late omits an occaſion of manifeſting his reſpect and veneration for kings, and Louis the Sixteenth comes in for his ſhare; he is extolled as a model of patriotiſm, and the paternal tenderneſs ſo conſpicuous for his ſubjects, is illuſtrated by the willing ſacrifices he was ready to make in their favour. More accurate, or leſs prejudiced obſervers than Mr. Burke do not behold this prince in the ſame point of view. Without dwelling on the

held every exertion of his powers in behalf of the real miſeries of a whole people.

Mr. Burke is aſſuredly the moſt determined enemy to republican doctrines, yet he paſſes over, or very ſlightly touches, on the eſtabliſhment of that form of government in America, but turns the whole collected battery of his rage and deteſtation againſt them who refuſe to worſhip the omnipotence of royalty in France. If, through their progreſs in the great and difficult plan of perfecting their conſtitution, the National

the excellence of his moral character, his exemplary ſobriety, temperance, prudence, &c. they regarded his public conduct with a ſuſpicious eye; they thought to have perceived in his character ſome traits that indicated no very ſtrong antipathy to arbitrary power. Zealous to exceſs of every innovation which tended to encroach on what he judged his prerogative, he was not over cautious in the exerciſe of it. The impriſonment of magiſtrates who defended their ancient privileges, of which he himſelf was ſo tenacious, the exile of the whole parliament of Paris for having refuſed to regiſter his arbitrary edicts, and the uncertain, fluctuating caprice of his diſpoſition, certainly did not entitle him to expect any very great confidence on part of the people, even if his late eſcape had not marked his real ſentiments, too plainly for his character to be ever again miſtaken. The nation ſeems, however, to have already forgot and pardoned all.

Aſſembly

Aſſembly have in a few inſtances exceeded the ſtricteſt bounds of moderation, ſympathy might have led him to pardon thoſe exuberancies in others, which are ſo remarkably conſpicuous in his own example; and ſurely it would have been more honourable to his character, more worthy of his genius, to have devoted his counſels and experience to their ſervice, than ſtill further to irritate their violence by the corroſive tendency of his own arguments. The principles that provoked and juſtified American reſiſtance, are exactly ſimilar with thoſe which brought about the French revolution; and if the plea of neceſſity was ever admiſſible in the work of any revolution, not even the ancient whigs of Mr. Burke would have denied its juſtice, when directed againſt the horrors of the late government in France; nevertheleſs he exhauſted the vaſt fund of his eloquence and abilities in the cauſe of America, whilſt he now arraigns the exertions of nearly thirty millions of people ſtruggling for freedom, with all the virulence of malignity and diſappointment.

appointment. On whatever ſide he engages, whether for liberty in America, or deſpotiſm in France, ſtill equal to himſelf, the torrent is irreſiſtible, bearing down all before him, he moves heaven and earth to his purpoſe.

"Flectere ſi nequeat ſuperos, Acheronta movebit."

The impetuoſity of his genius, and all the charms of eloquence, aided by more than Machiavelian ſophiſtry, cannot however change the eſſence of things.

The character of liberty is immutable and definite, nor can he who wrote and ſpoke for the intereſts of one, as if inſpired by the cauſe, now turn his abilities to the other ſide, without convicting himſelf of the baſeſt apoſtacy. In vain will he contend, that when he ſupported the American claim to independence, the conteſt was decided; that the Americans then had conquered, and that all further hoſtility on our part would have been ineffectual. In vain will he urge this point; becauſe, if the principle on which they purſued and gained that great object was wrong, no ſucceſs

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of their arms could alter its nature, or make it right, and he never can be acquitted for having given his ſanction to what he deemed injuſtice and rebellion; but, at all events, this very ſame argument applies with ten-fold force in favour of France, where, however impious the ambition to rear a fabric of liberty and equality on the ruins of feudality and ſlavery, the people conquered; and Mr. Burke might now go out a miſſionary to Philadelphia, there to preach the exploded doctrine of allegiance and ſubmiſſion to this country, with full as much proſpect of ſucceſs, as in ſounding the trumpet of revolt, with a view to overturn the preſent French government. He may aſſiſt to keep alive the diſtemper of jaundiced minds; he may help to promote the miſeries of civil war in the nation, but the cauſe of freedom is eſtabliſhed, and the people will never give back the rights they have recovered*.

* Mr. Payne, the diſtinguiſhed and ſucceſsful rival of Mr. Burke, has ſo ably expoſed the abſurdity of one age enacting laws which are to be binding on all poſterity, that it would be tedious and unneceſſary

All power confeſſedly originates from them; when it degenerates into tyranny, the power naturally reverts to its former channel; but Mr. Burke forgets the grievances of them who gave, and deplores only the humiliation of thoſe who ſo cruelly abuſed that power. Inſtead of raiſing a thankful voice in fervent gratitude to heaven for the triumphs of freedom, he doles out a lamentable epitaph on the downfall of deſpotiſm; yet in the midſt of his grief, for the unfortunate cauſe which he deplores in France, ſtill he finds a ſource of conſolation, that the ſyſtem is cheriſhed and kept up with increaſed vigour in this country. He exults in impious ſtrains, that, "New-" gate is rebuilt, and the manſion tenant-

ceſſary to enter on the ſubject. Hence the National Aſſembly have wiſely decreed an aſſembly of reviſion, which is to meet occaſionally at different intervals, to conſider and report on ſuch errors in the conſtitution that experience may have proved inimical to the purpoſe, in order to their correction or total repeal; this plan will certainly call forth all the violence of Mr. Burke, who ſo uniformly ſpurns the ſpirit of innovation.

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" ed*," and congratulates his fellow-citizens, " that they have Priſons in England " almoſt as ſtrong as the Baſtile, for them " who dare to libel the Queens of " France †." Oh! what a heart muſt he have, who can find ſubject for joy in the contemplation of ſuch dreadful ſcenes of human vice and miſery! with the ſame apathy, he caſts off his friend, and beholds him diſſolved in tears, without expreſſing a ſymptom of concern for the ſenſibility he had wounded.

They who are unhacknied in the vile trade of venal politics, and are guided by the purer feelings of humanity, regard with indignation the degeneracy of a man who could abandon ſuch a friend, and in one inſtant renounce every tye which had ſo long held that friendſhip together. Let us not however ſeize the weapon of an adverſary to turn it againſt himſelf. Groundleſs aſſertions, dreſſed in all the ſplendid imagery of language; the moſt brilliant alluſions,

* Vide, Mr. Burke's reflexions.
† Ibid.

calculated to dazzle the ſenſes, to confound and perplex the judgment, are the general reſources on which Mr. Burke reſts his attack. Truth has no need of ſuch weapons: to convict him, it would be but neceſſary to try him by the ſame ordeal, where he has been already ſo often defeated; by recurring to the paſt ſcenes of his political life, which contraſted with his preſent doctrines, what a ſtrange picture of paradox and verſatility ſhould we there behold! an experienced veteran in the manœuvres of politics, ſhifting his courſe, and regardleſs of principle (for no other way can it be explained), forſaking his moſt honorable connexions, and adapting his plans according to the tide where he imagines his intereſt to flow. Theſe ſentiments may not, at the moment, find univerſal aſſent, for the force of prejudice is ſtrong; but they who ſearch deeply into cauſes and effects, and are acquainted with Mr. Burke's political hiſtory, will not be tempted to believe, that he, whoſe reputation had been long grounded on one prin-

principle, would abandon that principle, and thereby riſque that reputation, unleſs there was ſome intereſt dearer to himſelf to be gratified in another. Time however will, and that probably ſoon, elucidate his real motives. It would be a libel on the human heart to aſſert, that its moſt amiable propenſities are ſacrificed without reluctance, and had I been ever happy in the friendſhip of Mr. Fox, it would be tears of blood, the loſs of ſuch friendſhip would coſt me. There may be exceptions to this rule, and the more refined notions of Mr. Burke may exalt him beyond ſuch vulgar prejudices, and if he had never profeſſed, it would be unfair to infer he had ever felt them; but the falſe friend can never be the true patriot. Were he however really ſincere in all the odium with which he labours to brand the French Revolution, it would be impoſſible to advance ſtronger arguments againſt himſelf, than might be deduced from his own authority; however as he has already ſufficiently ſmarted under

that rod, let us make a few ſtrictures on his late publications, more within the compaſs of our memory.

Mr. Burke ſtates his unalterable belief, "That every attempt to degrade, confiſ-"cate, or oppreſs the original gentlemen "of France, cannot be juſtified under any "ſhape it may aſſume *."

No act of oppreſſion can, from its nature, be juſtified; but it is a maxim, to which the common intereſts of ſociety demand ſubmiſſion, that partial evil may produce general good: on great emergencies, ſuch ſacrifices muſt be endured. When a vaſt empire has long groaned under the moſt enormous tyrannies, it is not the annihilation of that tyranny to be lamented, but that it ever ſhould have exiſted, is the real ſubject of complaint.

The original gentlemen of France (as Mr. Burke deſcribes them) had through the caſhiers delivered in, previous to the aſſemblage of the States General, volun-

* *Vide* Letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

tarily

tarily conſented to ſurrender their pecuniary exemptions, from a conſciouſneſs of the injuſtice on which their tenure reſted; whereby they were relieved from penalties that fell altogether on the inferior claſſes, certainly far leſs able to bear them; but they wanted public ſpirit, patiently to acquieſce under a decree, which deprived them of other darling privileges, that had ſo long flattered their vanity, and ſoothed their pride; thoſe falſe diſtinctions and gewgaw titles, that ſerved in lieu of every great and eminent quality,—that raiſed them above all law, and conferred the power to tyrannize, and ſometimes even to murder *.

* Pendant le regne de Lewis XV. un prince du ſang revenant un jour de la chaſſe, épioit un pauvre garçon ſur un arbre, quand avec le plus grand ſang froid, il tirait ſur lui et le tuait. L'affair etait annoncée à la cour et l'etiquette exigeait que le prince irait demander grace an roi; quand le roi lui ſouriant malignement, repéndit. Oui mon cousin, je vous l'accorde, et pour celui qui tirera ſur vous, je ferai autant.

The ſarcaſtic manner of his Majeſty's reply was at that time deemed a ſufficient puniſhment for the enormity of the crime.

Vide Les Memoires de la Cour de Louis XV.

The ſyſtem of equality provides againſt ſuch horrors; and in employing the force of retributive juſtice, adapts the puniſhment to the crime. "Whoever ſpills man's "blood, by man let his blood be ſpilled." Such is the unerring voice of Nature and of Reaſon. Whenever we deviate from that ſtrait path, and emerge into the regions of caſuiſtry and metaphyſics, we are bewildered in a labyrinth of ſcepticiſm and confuſion, whence the human underſtanding has not force ſufficient to diſengage itſelf.

The Prince de Condé would have hanged a man, or ſent him to the gallies for life, for killing a hare on his eſtate, while he, in a moment of caprice or paſſion, might have killed that very ſame man, not a ſhadow of crime alledged againſt him, without riſquing the ſmalleſt penalty from the laws.

A government *capable* of giving ſanction to ſuch abominations, is *incapable* of reform, or any amendment whatever. Let us hear no more, then, of perſecution inflicted

flicted on thoſe privileged impoſtors. *Their* reign was long and arbitrary.—*They* ſeldom ſpared where they felt an intereſt to puniſh; and the ſole remedy for ſuch enormities conſiſted in their annihilation. It is in the zenith of power, when humanity ſhines moſt conſpicuous, and the National Aſſembly have held forth an unprecedented example. They have almoſt in every inſtance preferred mercy to policy. The fugitive princes and their followers, ſpurning the offers of an indulgent parent, and inſtigating rebellion againſt her, actuated by a falſe and deſperate ambition, enraged by diſappointment, wandering through the continent of Europe, imploring arms againſt their country, have not experienced any confiſcation of their perſonal eſtates *. In all former revolutions, ſimilar examples of moderation are not to be found; but the ſureſt evidence of a good cauſe is the lenity and

* Proſcriptions, confiſcations, and executions, are the dreadful characteriſtics that marked the conduct of the ſucceſsful party, on the extinction of thoſe two rebellions that have happened in Great Britain during this century ſince the acceſſion of the Houſe of Hanover.

mildneſs with which it is conducted. Mr. Burke appears unacquainted with ſuch ſentiments; which has deſtroyed every idea of candour. His compaſſion was never excited by thoſe outrages that ſtruck at the root of all moral and civil rights. It was not the viſible dejection, the palpable crying miſery of millions, ſcourged by famine, and borne down by oppreſſion, even beneath the appearance of the ſpecies to which they belonged, that called forth his exertions. It was the ſplendid ſorrow, the merited degradation of privileged tyrants brought on by vices, if not immediately inherent in themſelves, at leaſt by thoſe directly connected with their ſituation, that touched his ſoul, and inſpired his eloquence. Nevertheleſs, in his career of popularity (for he has touched every point of the political compaſs), he once propoſed a bill of reform in the Engliſh Parliament; and although he did not go ſo far as the National Aſſembly have proceeded, yet they both went to the ſame object; tending to the correction of abuſes, whereby particular deſcriptions of

men

men would be materially affected; ſo that the ſame arguments as in numberleſs other inſtances (however he may labour to cover them), which he now applies againſt the French, are exactly pointed againſt himſelf. Mr. Burke's plan was confined to a very narrow ſcale, calculated to reform abuſes within that ſcale. The plan of the National Aſſembly is unlimited, and compriſes the happineſs of all the human race. There the whole difference conſiſts; the object was evidently by the ſame. If, according to his reaſoning, all government is an original compact, "Where the peo-"ple having diſcharged themſelves of their "original power, by an habitual dele-"gation, can in no caſe reſume that power "under any pretence which would not "equally authoriſe a diſpenſation with any "other moral duty, or, indeed, with them "all together *." On this ground, Mr. Burke could not poſſibly attack any one branch emerging from the conſtitution of

* *Vide*—The Appeal, page 124.

that

that government, without a palpable deviation from all his own principles*.

It is really painful for ever to encounter ſuch a maſs of inconſiſtency, where a man is in eternal warfare with himſelf; and he muſt certainly poſſeſs an uncommon degree of ſelf-ſufficiency, to pronounce dogmatically upon the ſecret views and ultimate deſigns of a numerous and enlightened aſſembly, repreſenting the whole French nation, engaged in the moſt intereſting and ſublime of all ſubjects;—for the expreſs purpoſe of aboliſhing that unnatural inequality of condition, that corrupt abuſe of power which had been the ſource of miſery for ages, to a people poſſeſſed of the beſt natural advantages to be happy; but he is too violent to wait the iſſue of their deliberations, and heſitates not to condemn the ſyſtems *in toto*, before even they themſelves had decided on the point, when,

* If the long enjoyed privileges of any claſs of men are to be attacked and deſtroyed, it is incompatible with reaſon and common ſenſe to aſſert, that it is not equally juſt and politic to attack prerogative itſelf, when arrived to the enormous exceſs we lately beheld it in France.

unleſs

unleſs by inſpiration, he could not poſſibly anticipate either its merits or defects. Had he ſubmitted to check that vehemence of temper, equally predominant on all occaſions, and finally waited till the committees had reported, and the aſſembly had finally ſettled the conſtitution, he might perhaps, now, as he had already done, condemn it as too complex and multifarious for practical uſe, without making a juſt allowance for ſuch errors as future experience would enable them to correct; but his ſoul muſt be callous, indeed (however he might deny the right or neceſſity of ſuch compleat innovation), if he did not admire and reverence the general theory, as tending to the farther perfection and felicity of mankind.

Government, even according to his own definition of the original compact, was deſigned for the intereſt of the many; "*Salus* "*populi ſuprema lex eſt.*" And whenever any local, partial intereſt meets this great commanding principle, it muſt, in every ſenſe, whether morally or politically, give way. Many and loud are the outcries which

which will be raiſed by thoſe affected by this alteration; but their clamours will be long forgotten, when generations the moſt diſtant are enjoying the benefits of it. Happily for the world, the evil is on its wane.—The vaſt inequality of rank and property, the immenſe deficit of nearly five millions ſterling between the annual revenue and expenditure *, with all the horrors neceſſarily ariſing from the feudal ſyſtem in France, have, at length, produced the happieſt effects.—They have wrought the regeneration of that country, they have already produced a new and auſpicious conſtitution in Poland, which extorts the eulogium even of Mr. Burke himſelf, and the two tremendous tyrants of the north have already begun to leſſen their military eſtabliſhments.

* It is to be underſtood, that, during the late government, no real limits were fixed either to the expences of their majeſties eſtabliſhment, or to that of his two brothers; and the debts paid by the nation, on the account of Monſieur and the Comte D'Artois, eſpecially of the latter, were enormous. The ſequel has proved how well theſe princes have diſcharged their debt of gratitude.

All

All this is natural;—from the moſt atrocious exceſſes accrue the greateſt bleſſings. It was not ſo much any act of his own, as the licentious tyranny and ferocious cruelty of the Tudors that proved fatal to Charles the Firſt. The civil wars between the Houſes of York and Lancaſter, however inſtructive in themſelves, had yielded no profitable leſſon to the ſucceeding princes; and no nation was ever more rigorouſly governed than England, during the reigns of the Houſe of Tudor. Uncommon vigour of mind, unchecked by any conſcience or reſtraint, in whatever either paſſion, ambition, or intereſt prompted, was the ſtriking characteriſtic of that family. The people groaned, and too often bled, under their dreadful ſway; but, at length, when a weak, irreſolute prince, willing, though unable, to maintain the ſame ſyſtem, fell within their power, they exerciſed that ſeverity over *him* which was ſo much more juſtly due to his predeceſſors. Great and crying was the occaſion, and perhaps the milder character of theſe times (when human prejudices have

have had time to ſubſide, and philoſophy has, in ſome degree, overcome the phrenzy of ſuperſtition), might have tempered the apparently ſavage act; but, whatever was the real character of that act, it led eventually to every good; it ſerved as an awful and tremendous leſſon to power; it paved the way to that immortal revolution which, however ſhort of the advantages that might have been derived from it, is ſtill the unexhauſted theme of panegyric in this country; and it muſt conduct us ſtill farther in the path of reformation, till the Houſe of Commons is purged of its venality, till the duration of Parliaments is ſhortened, till the Augean ſtable of the laws is cleanſed of its foul practitioners, till the laws themſelves are more impartially and gratuitouſly adminiſtered; till the judges themſelves attend more regularly and diligently to the duties of their profeſſion *, and till *Habeas*

* A perſon of my acquaintance is now, and has been a conſiderable time, ſuffering all the horrors of Newgate;—no judge having been in town, or near it, to make out his *Habeas* for a removal to the King's Bench.

Corpus,

Corpus, that *Chef d'Oeuvre* of this boaſted conſtitution, fall within the means of the pooreſt ſubject, whoſe diſtreſſes ſhould operate as an additional incentive to juſtice.

Theſe matters ſeem well underſtood in France. The National Aſſembly have formed a ſyſtem, the very reverſe of that which experience had ſhewn inimical to every purpoſe of wholeſome government. Inſtead of an ariſtocratic band of mercenary tyrants, armed on all occaſions againſt liberty, they have ſubſtituted a national guard of patriot citizens prepared on every emergency to bleed in its defence: they have annihilated the ſpurious, factitious claims of an overbearing profligate ariſtocracy, and turned the courſe of eccleſiaſtic preferment into the purer channel of wiſdom and virtue. They have made the immenſe revenues of the Church, which long ſerved only to pamper the luxury and ſwell the pride of an intolerant hierarchy, ſubſervient to the diſtreſſes of the ſtate, ſtill reſerving an ample proviſion for the ſuperior ranks of prieſthood, and meliorating the condition of the parochial clergy, where the

labour

labour and utility of the profeſſion actually conſiſted. They have not (as Mr. Burke ſays) "civilized war by the poliſhed mode "of conducting it," but they have deſtroyed its very ſource, and in renouncing every idea of conqueſt and all the horrors of ambition, have fixed a plan of general peace and concord, in oppoſition to that ſanguinary ſyſtem which, in the very teeth of morals and religion, had hitherto deſolated the world. They have reduced the exorbitant overgrown influence of the crown, and increaſed the weight and conſequence of the people in eſtabliſhing a popular impartial government, and finally they have reared to themſelves a monument of immortal glory by their declaration of rights, which forms the baſis of that government *. Theſe are a few of the *miſ-*

* If the French legiſlature perſevere in maintaining inviolate the fundamental principles of the conſtitution, and in being continually on their guard againſt all encroachments from the influence of the crown, which their exceſſive liberality, (perhaps ill judged), has enabled it to practiſe, few perſons are ſo advanced in life but they may ſtill live to behold and venerate the bleſſed effects of this immortal revolution, and the ſhort exiſtence they have allotted to their aſſemblies ſeems calculated, beyond all other remedies, to counteract the poiſon of corruption.

chiefs

chiefs reſulting to the nation from a ſubverſion of their ancient deſpotiſm.

To thoſe acquainted with the climate and ſituation of France, who know that its dominions contain three hundred thouſand ſquare miles of the richeſt and moſt fruitful ſoil, which yield all things requiſite either for luxury or uſe, and every article adapted to the purpoſes of life, on a ſuperficial view, it might appear extraordinary that a country ſo pre-eminently diſtinguiſhed by nature, ſhould be ſo far deeper plunged in miſery than many others not poſſeſſing ſimilar advantages. The only cauſe aroſe from the conſtitution of its government. Depreſſed by ſlavery, they had not vigour to provide for thoſe future wants to which a ſeaſon of ſcarcity might expoſe them. Conſcious of the precarious tenure on which they held their property, they were careleſs of remote contingencies, and anxious only to provide for the exigencies of the moment. Hence, they were often ſcourged by famine, and frequently engaged in thoſe ſcenes of tumult and revolt, ever inſeparable

from ſuch a wretched ſtate of things. Let it not however be inferred that the French were any ways deficient in induſtry and ingenuity requiſite for the improvement of their natural ſituation, they were eminently endued with both; but they found no ſpur to their exertion, where the breath of a tyrant could in one inſtant raviſh its whole produce from them.

Mr. Burke forever inveighs againſt the dreadful maſſacres and deſolation that have ſtained the French Revolution; but this is conſiſtent with his wonted exaggeration. It has ſometimes happened, that a very trifling, partial reform in a government has been attended with more of the above conſequences than are diſcoverable in the complete and glorious annihilation of the late ſyſtem; and the reaſon is obvious, becauſe it meets the general ſenſe and intereſts of the people. A few traitors to their country in the beginning fell victims to the fury they had excited. Their treachery was detected and puniſhed without the proceſs of trial; other violences have

been

been committed. In all popular commotions, ſimilar exceſſes are unavoidable; but I repeat, they are comparatively nothing in the preſent inſtance, and the anarchy and confuſion that did prevail, was fomented and kept up only by thoſe intereſted partizans of the late monarchy, whoſe uſurpations were about to be deſtroyed.

The Agrarian laws which Mr. Burke and his ariſtocratic friends deprecate ſo bitterly, never produced an hundredth part of the miſery, wickedneſs, and diſorder, that ſprung from the old arbitrary government in France. The downfal of that government may be dreadful to him, but it is matter of ſacred exultation to the world. It gratifies the virtuous feelings of philoſophy; it chears the drooping powers of humanity. It may be neceſſary that different gradations of rank ſhould exiſt in ſociety, and ſuch gradations always will exiſt; but they will hereafter depend in that country, not on the caſual occurrence of a long line of anceſtry, or the capricious favours and unmerited titles that an unworthy prince can beſtow on ſycophan-

tic favourites, but on the higher claims of perſonal merit, and ſuperior talents. Diſtinctions and popular admiration will then be confined to their proper ſphere. Fortune will neceſſarily follow, and a *juſt* gradation be eſtabliſhed, according to the maxims which reaſon and humanity alone can authorize.

All excluſive privileges annexed to any peculiar order of beings are a flagrant uſurpation; unjuſt and unnatural in the principle, from its exceſſive partiality; and fatal in effect, from thoſe additional burdens to which the people at large are in conſequence expoſed. When we recur to former periods in France, and contemplate the ſavage horrors which overcaſt the ſcene, where man was continually ſacrificed at the ſhrine of oppreſſion, and the life of a vaſſal, (the very term is now aboliſhed), was ever ſubject to the wanton caprice of his tyrant, which was not ſeldom indulged. What feeling heart can withhold its joy at the emancipation from ſuch tyranny, at the reſtoration of ſo many millions to their

natural

natural and civil rights? For a diſeaſe ſo inveterate, palliatives would have been uſeleſs: The ſtrongeſt corroſives only could be effectual; and if, in reviſing this vaſt complication of abuſes, the reformers have not attended to thoſe degrees of modification which Mr. Burke affects to recommend, but have reformed it altogether, it is not from any want of virtue or wiſdom in the principle, but from the terrible example of long-ſuffering that roufed their energy, without reſpect of perſons, to ſtrike at the very root of the evil.

Had the French legiſlature been actuated by that ſanguinary ferocious ſpirit, which Mr. Burke paints in ſuch gloomy colours, ſtill he cannot refuſe to them the tranſcendent praiſe of having invariably reſiſted the indulgence of that ſpirit, even under circumſtances of provocation and injury where juſtice and policy ſeemed to call for an example.

We adopt as a certain rule in the ordinary occurrences of life, that confidence once abuſed is irrecoverable. We are naturally

averſe from again truſting thoſe who have once deceived us. Experience is the guide by which wiſe men regulate their actions, and a deviation from its laws can only be juſtified by ſome very cogent or extraordinary circumſtance. An equal degree of caution is certainly neceſſary in political affairs. On the King's eſcape from Paris, the opinions of men were divided, according to their different paſſions and prejudices, their intereſt and inclinations. Some were anxious for his ſafety and ſucceſs, while others, whoſe ſentiments were more liberal and expanded, and who ſhuddered at the idea of the liberty and happineſs of a great nation being ſacrificed to the imaginary injuries or degradation of one man, or any particular deſcription of men, rejoiced in his diſappointment, as it might be the means of preventing a ſcene of horror that otherwiſe threatened to enſue. All perſons however agreed, that ſuch concerted, dangerous perfidy would never again be reſtored to a ſituation, where it might be enabled to attempt a ſimilar enterprize,

terprize. The magnanimity of the nation diſappointed that univerſal expectation; and whether the pageant ſhould be preſerved, or entirely ſet aſide, is no longer matter of diſcuſſion: the affirmative is decided. It becomes them, at all events, to keep a jealous eye on one whoſe conduct has diſplayed ſuch unequivocal teſtimony of enmity to the Revolution, and whoſe paſſions are kept in a ſtate of continual ferment by thoſe who have acquired an habitual command and influence over him. If it may be expedient, from motives of policy, to preſerve the parade and oſtentation of the throne, it would be dangerous and injudicious indeed, at this criſis, to confer the power, and it is their duty to keep the ſtricteſt guard over their minds, that they relapſe not into thoſe habits of characteriſtic levity which can alone prevent the happieſt accompliſhment of their immortal labours.

The Monarchs of Europe conſider themſelves involved in the miſt that has been caſt over the ſplendour of royalty in

France, and all the Northern powers are ſaid to have compoſed their jarring intereſts, and to have united in one common cauſe, to maintain the *right of ſovereigns*. Should this deſperate enterprize be attempted, it is an univerſal cauſe, and all nations will learn how to defend *their rights*. The example of a generous nation, that has given to ſoldiers the *right of citizens*, will not be loſt:—the memorable day—the day fatal to deſpotiſm, when ſoldiers reſiſted thoſe orders they had been long accuſtomed to obey, and yielded to the dictates of reaſon and humanity, the event of that day points out a duty to all the troops in the world, paramount to that of military ſubjection—*the duty of citizens*, and they will then recollect, that in contending for the ideal *right* of ſovereigns, they are ſtruggling to prevent a recovery of their own.

Should theſe, *bourreaux couronnés* *, conſpire to cruſh that ſpirit of liberty and in-

* An expreſſion applied by Monſ. de Mirabeau to the late Emperor.

novation

novation which has already pierced the iron ſceptre of one tyrant, "who, by the "courteſy of Europe, (as Mr. Burke ob-"ſerves) is conſidered as moſt Chriſtian†," pouring a hoſt of mercenary, armed ſlaves (not yet enlightened to a ſenſe of their own felicity and advantage) into the heart of France, they may render thoſe beautiful provinces, where Nature has laviſhed all her bounty, one ſcene of blood and devaſtation, but they will never be able to ſubdue the invincible ſpirit of thirty millions of people, juſt emancipated from the bonds of ſlavery, to enjoy the bleſſings of freedom. Let us hope the flagitious, unwarrantable enterprize will not be attempted; and let them recollect, as a warning againſt it, that a rude, undiſciplined rabble of American peaſants, goaded by oppreſſion, and defending their own native territories, repulſed and conquered the beſt-conditioned regular troops that ever faced an enemy, and commanded by the moſt ſkil-

† Vide Mr. Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

ful,

ful, experienced general, Great Britain could oppoſe againſt them.

There is a fatality attending the actions of ſome men; where they look for triumph, the reſult is diſgrace; and in this dilemma Mr. Burke ſeems for ever involved. He profeſſes to have publiſhed his "Reflexions on the French Revolution" that, "his countrymen might be enabled to eſtimate the wiſdom of the plans held out to their imitation *." It was confeſſedly his purpoſe to fix an indelible ſtigma on thoſe plans; whereas his eccentric performances have produced the very oppoſite effect, by bringing into action an immenſity of abilities, and unconquerable reaſoning, that would otherwiſe have been dormant, and which confirms their ſtability far beyond his power to deſtroy †.

When

* Vide Mr. Burke's Letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

† As an enthuſiaſtic worſhipper of the Britiſh conſtitution, he ſhould have ſuffered it to remain in peace, for it is notorious, that Mr. Burke himſelf has done more to excite enquiry, and to effect a change in the ſentiments of the people of England, by

When Mr. Burke ſpeaks of thoſe, in whom the principal authority is veſted, his account is ſo flagrantly exaggerated that there is not a ſhadow of truth in the whole ſtatement; and the libel would therefore be too contemptible for notice from any other authority, but he is too generally read not to demand attention. "The frauds, "the violences, the ſacrilege, the havock, "and ruin of families; the diſperſion and "exile of the pride and flower of a great "country; the diſorder, the anarchy, the "violation of property, the cruel murders, "the inhuman confiſcations, and in the end, "the inſolent domination of bloody, ferocious clubs. Theſe are the things which "they love and admire*." Such are the mere phantoms of his own diſtempered imagination; no ſentence of exile, no proſcription, no confiſcation, no executions, have taken

by bringing the principles of the new French government before their eyes, within the ſpace of the laſt ſix months, than the Convivial Meetings of all the patriotic Societies in London could poſſibly have effected in twenty years.

* Vide the Appeal.

place,

place, all proſecutions have ſubſided, and if the "*pride and flower* of a great coun-"try" have judged proper to baniſh themſelves, rather than ſubmit to the wiſe and equitable laws of a limited monarchy, ſtill their property has been held ſacred, their exile is voluntary, and their return would be hailed with joy and acclamations.—Such however are the prophane ſtrains in which he deſcribes that illuſtrious band of philoſophers, patriots and ſtateſmen, who reſcued their country from the moſt frightful bondage, *as a banditti of fraudulent uſurpers, monſters of depravity, rebels, traitors*, acting on principles they know to be wicked, and corrupting the nation to its own deſtruction *. Accuſtomed to court the ſmiles of power, he ſhould have treated this exalted body with more reverence; but, according to his diſtorted notions, power

* The conduct purſued by the French Aſſembly ſince the capture of their perjured king, and his acceptance of the conſtitution, is the fulleſt refutation of Mr. Burke's calumny, and will ever ſhine the brighteſt example of moderation, firmneſs, and humanity.

appears

appears more reſpectable in the odious perſon of a ſingle deſpot, than in the majeſtic graces of a virtuous and enlightened aſſembly. To men, in the ſober habit of reflexion, ſuch indecent intemperance muſt ſeem a very ſorry proof of the aſperſions he wiſhes to convey; nor is it explicable why Mr. Burke mixes ſo much acrimony and paſſion in a queſtion where he cannot have any immediate concern. No ſubject can apparently be more remote from any perſonal intereſt to call forth his exceſſive violence; and the moſt diſcriminating judges are of opinion that he has overacted his part. Were violence indeed a mark of ſincerity, it might be explained more agreeably with his wiſhes; but he has lived long enough to know that moderation is the ſureſt proof of conviction, and that paſſion never yet was uſeful to any cauſe. Sometimes this ſpecies of declamation may ſerve to cover the want of argument, and never fails to excite the admiration, and often to extort benefits from them in

in behalf of whoſe intereſts or prejudices it is exerted.

His compaſſion is divided between the ſufferings of royalty, the degradation of ariſtocracy, and the dreadful uſurpations committed on the church poſſeſſions: nevertheleſs, when the late emperor ſtretched forth the iron arm of power, and let it fall on the rich monaſteries of his dominions—when he ſeized their treaſures, and annihilated their corporations for the avowed purpoſe of maintaining his numberleſs hoſt of mercenary ſlaves, expreſsly armed to quell the enraged ſpirit of his miſerable ſubjects, and to facilitate the ſucceſs of his vain and impracticable projects, the enormities of the Imperial ſon of Marie Thereſe, "the immortal princeſs who "had given ſo many emperors and queens "to Europe, were ſpared." Such boundleſs, unconditional, and unprovoked depredations were ſilently paſſed over; but when a great nation, upon whom the power devolved, were neceſſitated in behalf of themſelves and poſterity to operate an entire revolution

revolution in that department, with a view only to the general proſperity, and at the ſame time providing as much as poſſible for the intereſts of thoſe immediately affected, Mr. Burke then reprobated, with his uſual vehemence the act of a whole people, founded on the inevitable rules of juſtice and neceſſity, and laviſhed upon them all that acrimony which from the moſt amiable motives might have been juſtified on the other occaſion, where the inſatiate, ſtupid ambition of one ſingle tyrant only was concerned.

When ſuch eternal inſtances of abſurdity and contradiction occur, ſeverity becomes ſtrict juſtice; and it is impoſſible to enforce too ſtrongly, the pernicious tendency of the example.

Mr. Burke never appears more embarraſſed, than when ſtriving to extricate himſelf from this inſuperable dilemma: Confidence, however, ſerves his purpoſe better than all the arguments he either does, or can produce. 'He complains, that his opponents ſhould not have candour to diſtinguiſh

guiſh between a difference of conduct under a variation of circumſtances, and an inconſiſtency in principle *.'

Why ſhould he expect to receive indulgence that he never grants? He for ever abandons the leading conſtituent principle of all moral and political juſtice, the only ſure infallible guide of human conduct, that briefly and forcibly, in feweſt words, inculcates the whole duty of man. 'To act 'in regard to others, as we could wiſh 'them to act towards ourſelves.' This maxim appears to have no exiſtence in his creed. He proteſts againſt the validity of all acts emanating from the National Aſſembly, as not conformable to the inſtructions they received previous to their election. Why ſhould the repreſentatives of the French nation be more tied down to an implicit obedience of inſtructions, than a member for Briſtol ſhould be under an obligation of ſubmitting to thoſe of his conſtituents? Why ſhould Mr. Burke attempt to impoſe teſts on the conſciences of the

* Vide The Appeal.

Proteſtant

Proteſtant diſſenters, while he reſiſts every teſt that might tend to operate as a reſtraint on his own political wanderings, for which no range can be too extenſive *?

Agreeing with his poſition, 'that a 'change of conduct under particular' circumſtances does not authorize an imputation of inconſiſtency in principle,' it is on that ground, the French Aſſembly are perfectly acquitted. In the interval of the publication of the cahiers, and final accompliſhment of the conſtitution, during the progreſs of their labours, a multiplicity of well known incidents aroſe, that entirely altered the complexion of the buſineſs. It could not then be imagined that men, whoſe minds were exalted by the grandeur of the ſubject, would omit any golden opportunity that offered, of extending their freedom and proſperity: ſuch an omiſſion

* Mr. Fox, (in my opinion, very erroneouſly) has in this inſtance invariably ſupported Mr. Burke's doctrine; uniformly rejecting all teſts between the elector and repreſentative, but unlike that gentleman, he has with conſiſtent propriety ever reprobated all kinds of reſtraint on the opinions of others, by which he would not conſent to be bound himſelf.

would have been unpardonable: They ſhewed themſelves more deſerving of the confidence they enjoyed, and did not attend to trivial reforms, where the moſt complete advantages were to be acquired. In vain, therefore, are ſuch arguments ſtarted againſt them, for if ever the ſenſe of a people has been decidedly and clearly expreſſed, the general ſanction given to the whole proceedings of the National Aſſembly confirms it. But with what glaring abſurdity does this objection come from Mr. Burke, who in his public capacity has on every occaſion ſupported the houſe of commons when acting in oppoſition to the acknowledged ſentiments of the people—Who defended with all his might the coalition parliament, and who, when it had been diſſolved, and a new election had proved beyond a poſſibility of doubt, the general opinion, actually entered a remonſtrance on the journals of the houſe againſt that diſſolution, which had been almoſt unanimouſly demanded by the whole nation. In following him through his political mazes

we are abſolutely bewildered in a labyrinth of confuſion, and whether his contradictions be voluntary or not, even if his logic was equal to his ſophiſtry and declamation, it could not poſſibly reconcile them.

A letter from Mr. Burke to the ex-biſhop of Aix, that has lately found its way into the Engliſh prints, indicates pretty plainly the polluted ſource whence his intelligence is derived, and on this account he may find ſome pretext for his exaggerations. In that letter, which generally is no otherways intitled to notice than for the overſtrained diſguſting flattery it contains, there is ſtill one remark not unworthy of being mentioned, from the direct falſehood of its application; "*That* "*there is but one kind of honour and virtue* "*in the world. It conſiſts in ſacrificing* "*all other conſiderations to the ſentiments of* "*our duty, of our right, and of our piety.* "*This the Clergy of France have done.*"

This, I aſſert, they have not done. From their very origin, prieſts have uniformly and ſtedfaſtly inverted this moral duty, *making*

every conſideration ſubordinate to the purpoſes of their own intereſt and inordinate ambition. The hiſtory of the world in general, and of the late critical ſtate of affairs in France, fixes this point beyond the reach of controverſy. Let us then ſpurn miſrepreſentation flowing from ſuch a poiſoned channel, from a deſcription of men the leaſt qualified to decide, as being moſt affected by the deciſion; from men who have ever been the moſt jealous of their power, and who, ſo far from being the Apoſtles of peace and concord, the pious Martyrs of vindictive perſecution, (as Mr. Burke deſcribes them); ſuffering in ſilence and reſignation, are the very fire-brands of rebellion, and are, at this inſtant, diſperſed over all the nations of Europe, ſcattering the ſeeds of conſpiracy and ſedition, and inſtigating every power on earth to carry the ravages of civil war into their country.

To keep the people in ignorance, has been the invariable rule of prieſts and tyrants of every deſcription. Ignorance has been the ſcourge of the world from its very beginning.

ning. On the ignorance of the multitude their dominion was founded; by cheriſhing that ignorance, it was ſo long preſerved. The godlike virtues of a Julian, or a Marcus Aurelius, were more obnoxious in their ſight, than all the infernal vices of a Conſtantine or a Nero.

The empire of deſpotiſm and ſuperſtition, which was immediately interwoven with their own, found a cool, but determined enemy, in the benignant philoſophy, and unſhaken conſtancy of Julian; while all the horrors of fanaticiſm and cruelty that ſtained the life of Conſtantine, ſerved to cement its baſis.

Hence the Chriſtian writers have laboured to brand the poſthumous fame of this excellent prince and philoſopher*; at the

* Voltaire, in characterizing Julian, ſpeaks of him as follows:

En diſcutant les faits, on a été obligé de convenir que Julien avait toutes les qualités de Trajan, *hors le gout ſi long temps pardonné aux Grecs, et aux Romains*; toutes les vertus de Caton, mais non pas ſon Opiniatreté et ſa mauvaiſe humeur, tout ce qu'on admira dans Jules Ceſar, et aucun de ſes Vices; il eut la continence de Scipion. Enfin, il fut en tout egal à Marc Aurele, le premier des hommes.

ſame time that they have raiſed monuments of panegyric to the memory of a Conſtantine, and ſometimes even of a Nero.

In recurring ſo far as to the period of our Saxon anceſtors, we ſhall there find the clergy determined to confine all the learning and knowledge to themſelves. Indeed, what improvement could be expected from the reaſonings of men whoſe intereſt it was to diſcard the light of reaſon? of men whoſe inſatiate avarice, and all-graſping ambition, the horn of Amalthæa would not have contented? To aid their purpoſe, præternatural powers were ſubſtituted in lieu of nature and philoſophy. Supported by this powerful magic, no moral obligation ever reſtrained their turbulent ſpirit and rapacity. Whether by a Dunſtan or a Becket, the object was ever purſued with the ſame unremitting vigilance and activity: all auſterities practiſed on themſelves, or tortures on others, were no conſideration, when oppoſed to the aggrandizement of eccleſiaſtic authority. The more the people were immerſed in ignorance, the more

more firmly was their throne eſtabliſhed, and more ardent became their exertions to cultivate that ignorance. Nothing was ſo abſurd or revolting, that prieſts of every ſect, in all ages and nations, have not been ready to propagate: The images of idolatry have been heard to harangue in ſupport of their favourite tenets, and the more marvellous the doctrine of the preacher, the more did it ſerve to inſpire confidence, and inculcate belief in the minds of his blind deluded diſciples. Their empire is obviouſly on the decline, and they have of late felt a ſevere ſhock; but they ſtill preſerve the ſame ſpirit of dominion and tyranny, and the means are only wanting in order to diſplay its effects. The inquiſition, however reformed from its ancient atrocities, ſtill exiſts; and in many nations the church continues to hold an unnatural and deſtructive influence. Hence I repeat, much is yet to be done; ere the generality of mankind reach that climax of perfection and happineſs which their nature admits of; much of the old leaven remains to be

deſtroyed, and infinite labour will be employed to revive the farce.

Thus, in all deſpotic and eccleſiaſtic governments, the preſs is and ever has been the firſt grand object of political reſtraint. To impoſe fetters on the human mind,—to ſtop the progreſs of reaſon and ſcience, thoſe formidable enemies to tyranny and ſuperſtition, every art and violence has been practiſed. Had mankind been more enlightened, they would not patiently have endured the yoke ſo long, and a better order of things would have ſooner appeared. At length, the Aurora begins to dawn;—brighter proſpects open before us, which the ſame inſtruments will be again employed to deſtroy; but the example of a great and united people, the beſt adapted, both from ſituation and conſequence, to finiſh their virtuous labours with effect, will defeat all the intrigue of courts, the malignancy of prieſts, and every artifice of diſappointed ambition.

Let us therefore leave them to their ineffectual labours.

It would be tedious to enter too minutely into Mr. Burke's diſtinctions between ancient and modern whigiſm. We all know how prone men are to adapt their language and opinions according to circumſtances, and the impoſſibility of aſcertaining the political creed of any deſcription of perſons. If this argument required illuſtration, it would appear no where with more ſtriking effect than in his own unſteady fluctuating politics. The hiſtory of the preſent time tells us, that the moſt ſturdy champions of oppoſition bend beneath the influence of court diſcipline, and that certain convenient doctrines muſt be ſubmitted to, as neceſſary paſſports to royal protection. Whenever this pliability, upon trial, does not appear, the alternative has always been a ſpeedy return to the old anti-miniſterial benches. Whatever notions, prejudice, or error may attach to the name of Whig, or Tory, they are purely ideal.—From the inſtant either one or other approach the throne in a miniſterial capacity, they muſt, like camelions, change their natural

tural colour, and aſſume the tone thereof. The Tories, in Queen Anne's, and in the ſucceeding reigns, were often the popular party, the ſtrenuous advocates for liberty, while the Whig miniſtry, the renowned Prototypes of Mr. Burke, occaſionally preached the ſtupid doctrine of non-reſiſtance; and, as he does now, repelled every effort to ſtem the torrent of corruption, and the power of the crown;—They, like him, oppoſed all attempts to correct the imperfect and vicious mode of repreſentation; they cheriſhed abuſes, and, in general, dreaded innovation; although they adopted the moſt pernicious of all innovation, in ſupporting the eſtabliſhment of ſeptennial parliaments *. Hence we ſee how little credit is due to the frivolous diſtinction of Whig or Tory, or to that of an-

* It is true, that at the revolution the Whigs ſtedfaſtly and ſucceſsfully ſupported the triennial Bill; but on this great conſtitutional queſtion, Mr. B. certainly does not fall under the deſcription of an ancient Whig. In a ſucceeding reign, the *ſoi diſant* Whigs altered their ſentiments, and re-eſtabliſhed ſeptennial parliaments, more favourable to their own intereſts, and more congenial with the views and principles of the throne.

cient

cient or modern whigiſm; the motto is ſtill the ſame,

" Non mihi res, ſed me rebus ſubmittere conor."

It is time, therefore, to aboliſh ſuch puerile diſtinctions,—to explore only the lights of reaſon and truth,—and to cultivate, with enthuſiaſm, that theory, whoſe baſis is fixed on the natural untransferable rights of Men and Citizens. It is not the managers for conducting the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, who are to regulate the ſtandard of liberty in France at this juncture; nor was it the plan of the French aſſembly, blindly to follow, but wiſely to profit from the example and error of others. To diſcover the truth, and follow up its principles, is the ſure criterion of wiſdom.

" Quod verum atque decens, curo et rogo, et omnis in hoc ſum."

In the courſe of his laſt performance, Mr. Burke preſents his readers with various extracts from the ſpeeches of the *Whig* managers, for conducting the trial of Dr. Sacheverel, who, it muſt be remembered, were

were moſt of them members of the adminiſtration at that time, conſequently, however obliged to adhere to the doctrines on which the proſecution originated; yet at the ſame time it became another point of duty, to temper and qualify that proſecution, in order to render it palatable as poſſible to the Queen's Majeſty, ſo that they came under the deſcription of a certain claſs of men, that has become numerous ſince thoſe days, whom we call *trimmers*; ſignifying a ſort of temporizing civil gentlemen, willing to accomodate themſelves to all parties. After having favoured us with thoſe extracts, he obſerves, "that he ſhall not endeavour to vindicate their principles, but "that he is content in proving his doctrine "exactly analogous with theſe of the ancient "Whigs *," as if it was of the leaſt conſequence, whether his opinions were with, or againſt them.

He then proceeds to quote many paſſages from Mr. Payne's publication on the Rights

* Vide The Appeal.

of

of Man; but he omits to take the leaſt notice of a report there ſtated, that he is in receipt of a penſion, under another name, from the Britiſh Government*. It would have been ſatisfactory, had he vouchſafed to have given ſome information on this point. The manner in which he has *blinked* the queſtion, certainly admits no favourable conſtruction.

In regard to thoſe extracts from Mr. Payne's book, which he gives ſo fully; with the ſame conſiſtency, that he declined entering into a vindication of the tenets of his renowned prototypes, he withholds his reaſons for condemning the principles laid down in the Rights of Man. It might have been rationally expected however, particularly as he has ſhewn himſelf ſo ready on other occaſions, whenever it ſuited his purpoſe to attack the weak ſide of an argument, that he would have rejoiced in an opportunity of expoſing the fallacy and wickedneſs of doctrines that had raiſed ſuch

* Vide Rights of Man.

violent,

violent, indignant, emotions. But, alas! his anger evidently ariſes from an inability to confute thoſe doctrines. His whole labours are directed in one uniform ſtrain of general invective againſt particular axioms of government, and when he himſelf has brought them forward, apparently for diſcuſſion, he ſtill declines all comments upon them. Conſcious of defeat, he then gives full ſcope to paſſion, and after a high flown panegyric on the merciful diſpoſition of George III. and the lenity of government in his electoral dominions, indignantly exclaims, (alluding to the extracts laſt mentioned,) "Theſe are the maxims which, "under the idea of Whig principles, ſeveral "perſons, and among them men of no "mean mark, have aſſociated themſelves to "propagate. I will not attempt, in the "ſmalleſt degree, to refute them*." Away with the Jeſuitical evaſion!

It is an inſult to his readers, to conceive them capable of ſwallowing ſuch groſs im-

* *Vide*—The Appeal.

poſi-

poſition. When his ſophiſtry is forced to ſubmit, nor can even caſt a ſhade of doubt over the truths he would wiſh to ſubvert, he then endeavours to miſlead by paſſion, when obliged to abandon the line of reaſon and conviction. If the principles included in thoſe extracts, which Mr. Burke has brought forward, ſo incautiouſly on his own account, in his laſt publication, where he ſhines in the amiable, modeſt, light of his own panegyriſt, are wicked and falſe to the degree he declares them, let any candid perſon decide, if they are not of that ſerious ſubſtantial nature, to require immediate and ample diſcuſſion; and if ſo dangerous as he pretends, certainly the more do they deſerve to be expoſed and reprobated; but he poſitively ſays, " I will not attempt to " refute them;" which is tantamount to an acknowledgment of his inability to do ſo. True it is that he is not over fond of probing an argument to the bottom, he delights rather to ſkim only the ſurface; nevertheleſs, where principles of government, the moſt directly hoſtile to thoſe he ſo ardently defends, are

the

the object of attack, his declining the conteſt, moſt clearly proclaims his defeat; and as he is ſo ready to enter the liſts on other occaſions, whether ſucceſsfully or not; his keeping back on this, ſpeaks for itſelf.

He has the art, however, at all times, when it ſuits his purpoſe, to preſs on the paſſions, when he has no chance of prevailing over the underſtanding of men.

He talks of levelling and republican principles, the danger of innovation, and the extreme injuſtice of too great incroachment on the royal prerogative; and thinks to ſnatch a trophy, by the vulgar ſtratagem of applying obnoxious epithets, to acts the moſt neceſſary and commendable. In all the governments I ever yet heard or read of, a levelling principle appears, in ſome degree, juſt and requiſite. In every monarchy, even according to partial friends of that ſyſtem, prerogative is generally extended too far for any beneficial purpoſe, and the moſt deſtructive evils are allowed to exiſt, rather than riſque the attempt of innovation. This great advocate of prejudice labours

with

with infinite pains to cheriſh and keep up theſe abuſes; let us hope the ſucceſsful example of our neighbours will for ever deſtroy them.

Human nature is fond of power; men will always reſiſt every invaſion of it; debauched by luxury, and enervated by the long habits of every indulgence, the French Nobleſſe were not prepared for this ſudden Revolution. It could not therefore be expected that perſons of this deſcription would be actuated by a ſpirit of patriotiſm, to cooperate in the great and glorious work of undermining a fabrick, on which their own ſtrength depended. It was evident that they would employ every expedient either of ſtratagem or force to defend thoſe darling privileges which they had been accuſtomed to believe interwoven with nature itſelf; their hereditary birth-right. It was the ſplendor of a throne, the fountain of all their titles and diſtinctions, to which they looked up; ſeldom did they look down on the miſeries of the people; jealous to ſupport the one, they ſought no remedy for the other; while

they indulged their pampered luxury and power to the utmoſt, *La Cánaille** was only an object of ſcorn and inſult to them. Amongſt this claſs, Mr. Burke has certainly his ſincere and warm admirers. Their reign, however, is paſt. Reaſon and philoſophy are gradually extending their empire, and the preſent champion of prejudice and prerogative, after having formerly conquered in the common cauſe of mankind, now vanquiſhed on every ſide, muſt eventually yield up the point, and probably, (it is no unfair conjecture,) we may hereafter once more behold him ſhifting his courſe, again a candidate for popularity; precedents of this kind are not wanting, and his partiality for precedents is well known.

It may not be improper here, to enquire into the origin of thoſe titles, whoſe abolition excites ſuch tender emotions of regret and compaſſion in the breaſt of Mr. Burke.

* An Ariſtocratic Epithet uſed in France, to deſcribe the inferior order of citizens.

They

They were ſtrangers to all the ancient empires, monarchies and republics; and we know no more of them, than that they had their birth in the weſtern world, when it groaned under the moſt oppreſſive and degrading vaſſalage, ariſing out of feudal tenures, where the people were ſlaves, and every baron a deſpot, within his own domain. The evil, as mankind grew more enlightened, became intolerable. All the laws of nature were reverſed. Honours and protection were for the rich, and taxes only for the poor. The chain however is now entirely broken in France, and what was ſo long and ſo lately the reſult of mere chance, will henceforward open the wideſt field for generous emulation; ſince it is a fundamental principle of her conſtitution, that all diſtinction and emoluments, ſhould be the excluſive reward of virtue and talents.

On a calm diſpaſſionate ſurvey of the maxims on which this innovation is founded, is any thing diſcoverable, to raiſe ſuch uncommon rancour and indignation in the mind of this Patriot Philoſopher?

Does he tremble for the conſequences of the example in this country, leaſt he ſhould not be permitted to ſhine forth in the full blaze of all thoſe honours, that are probably preparing for him?

In the long and ſervile habit of crouching beneath the brow of a haughty Ariſtocracy, whence he has derived ſuch ſingular benefits, a mind not fraught with ſentiments of an enlarged philanthropy, may be imagined to anticipate with anxiety and regret, every event that tends to accelerate its general diſſolution.

A nation ever accuſtomed to take the lead and give the law to Europe, in the frivolous occurrences of life, may be well expected to act with more deciſive influence, when it has adopted the nobleſt character, and paſſed to a revolution, which promiſes the moſt brilliant and effectual advantages.

The ſucceſs of this Revolution muſt in the natural courſe of things, ſooner or later produce a change of ſyſtem in all European governments.

If,

If, as it has been in the beginning, Mr. Burke ſhould continue a falſe prophet to the end, and France, againſt all his predictions, ſhall hereafter diſplay the fulleſt and happieſt effects of her free Conſtitution, contraſted with her former miſerable ſituation, it would be a ſoleciſm to imagine, that all enlightened nations will not catch the ſpirit, and be animated by the example.

To decry any ſyſtem, and to paſs judgment before trial, is the moſt flagrant injuſtice. The eloquent advocate for the excluſive privileges of ariſtocracy, has joined that diſaffected crew, and raiſed a terrible hue-and-cry againſt popular rights, thereby increaſing the anarchy and confuſion, which muſt neceſſarily prevail in the firſt ebullitions of a ſimilar revolution, where the prejudice and paſſions of different claſſes of diſappointed men are fermented to a pitch of phrenzy, nor deigning to wait the iſſue of thoſe labours, whoſe avowed object was the public welfare. The phrenzy however, is allayed.

From the nature of things, ſooner or

later, all fallacy is detected—prejudice may, for a time, bear up an erroneous ſyſtem, and private intereſt will employ every exertion in its ſupport; but truth is eventually triumphant. Hence, that power which was ſo long and ſo vilely abuſed, reverts finally to its proper channel; and, however at firſt reſiſted, or however deſperate and numerous the combined hoſt of enemies ſtill continue, who by the elevation of others to their natural rank and eſtimation, are baſe enough to feel a degradation of their own;—ſtill all their efforts will not avail, for the more the cauſe of freedom and humanity is inveſtigated, the more immoveably will its triumph be eſtabliſhed. Without being averſe to the true principles of our own government, would to God that it practically adopted ſome of thoſe laid down in the French code. We ſhould then experimentally feel, whether in a natural or ſocial ſtate, the rights of men are or are not the mere ſhadow Mr. Burke repreſents them. We ſhould diſcover that there are bleſſings within the reach of other

nations,

nations, to which it is impious, according to his doctrine, for Engliſhmen to aſpire; we ſhould then ſee parliaments reſtored to their proper conſtitutional duration; no more ſhould we behold a miniſter, ſurrounded by his ſatellites on the treaſury benches, exerciſing an undue influence that oſtenſibly pervades almoſt every corner of the houſe; no more, all ranks of place-men, penſioners, ſervants, and dependants of the crown, would be allowed to ſcatter their corruption through the land; the magic wand would be broken, the taliſman deſtroyed, government would not then dare to ſpurn the juſt and well-earned claims of indigent merit; it would conſider honour and equity as the firmeſt pillars of power. Services would be requited in proportion to their value; fidelity to engagements be held an indiſpenſible obligation*, and the diſtreſſes of the complainant,

* The dreadful and extraordinary death of Mr. Sutherland, which appears to have made little or no impreſſion on thoſe moſt intereſted in the tranſaction, (however calculated to alarm the ſenſibility, and even ſhock the *intellects* of the firmeſt ſtoic, beholding ſuch a ſcene) ought to afford an eternal

ant, inſtead of operating as a pretext for evaſion and delay, ſerve to accelerate the routine of juſtice. Morals would then be blended with politics, and the rights of each individual, unalterably ſecured.

We ſhould then ſpurn that ſyſtem now exploded in France, which, to gratify the brutal rage of conqueſt, to indulge the ſenſeleſs obſtinacy, or to ſatisfy the ruthleſs ambition of kings, deſolates nations, ſquanders immenſe treaſures, ſports with the lives of millions, and lays the baſis of enormous taxes, that ſerve only to enlarge the eſtabliſhment, and increaſe the influence of the crown, while the vigour of the people is thereby ſuppreſſed, and their native character wholly deſtroyed. Had the miſt of prejudice been removed from before their eyes, no perſon would then have dared to inſinu-

leſſon to king and miniſters, how they trifle with the conſcientious feelings of a man of honour. This unfortunate gentleman, victim to the brutal neglect and inſolence of office, all his reiterated applications ſlighted, promiſes broken, every hope cut off, and deſtitute of means to ſupport himſelf and family, yielded to his ſituation, and thus was driven to the deſperate act that terminated his exiſtence.

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ate, that " natural and civil rights are incompatible with each other*." All government is founded on the natural rights of man; it can have no other end than to protect thoſe rights, and promote his general happineſs. Men are under an inviolable obligation to obey the laws while they operate to their advantage; whenever they become their ſcourge and miſery, the obligation ceaſes;—the compact is diſſolved; the principle of non-reſiſtance is then exploded on the counter-principle of neceſſity, and the people reverting to their original inalienable rights, paramount to the authority of kings, exacting unqualified ſubmiſſion from them, are bound in juſtice to themſelves to reſiſt oppreſſion, and reſume the reins of power.

If a citizen commit any violent outrage againſt the laws, they ordain him to death—By a parity of reaſoning, if government be guilty of a like offence, whereby millions ſuffer, there can be no rational

* Vide The Appeal.

cauſe

cauſe of exemption from the ſame cataſtrophe.

According to the late conſtitution in France, the parliaments had a right of veto on the king's edicts, as the king of England has over the acts of this legiſlature; but if the parliament of Paris ever ventured to exerciſe that right, and to perſevere in aſſerting it, the conſequence was a band of armed troops at their gates, and a compulſion to regiſter the edict. Here, we behold a moſt flagrant violation of the laws on the part of government, and in ſtrict juſtice, the puniſhment ſhould have been proportionate to the heinouſneſs of the crime.

Should ever the laws in this country become odious to the people, from an intolerable load of grievances and oppreſſion, the ſame conſequences will follow, as we have lately beheld in another. The people will not then hearken to an abolition of particular abuſes, which might be ſoon revived and brought into action again. They will purſue a far wider courſe. They will ſtrike the axe at the very root, and extirpate alto-

altogether a ſyſtem, that could engender ſuch abominable evils. They will afterwards proceed as their neighbours have proceeded: to form a wiſer and better Conſtitution of Government,—adapted to a more equal diſpenſation of general liberty and happineſs. Excluſive privileges will be aboliſhed, and all partial ſyſtems exploded on the maxim of univerſal juſtice and utility. A rational ſpirit of innovation, will radically extirpate all that vice and corruption which had ſo long embittered the life of man. The impious hereſy, that men are doomed to ſink under their ignorance, "that where "they cannot comprehend, they are bound "to venerate*," will be confounded, and the author puniſhed. The fallacy and wickedneſs of ſuch ſyſtems will be expoſed, and the errors of antiquity be expunged from the code of a modern and enlightened juriſprudence. All the ancient governments carry error on the face of them. It is one of the moſt cruel and inveterate of all the

* Vide The Appeal.

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numberleſs evils coherent in theſe governments, that from a frequency of the occurrence, men become inured to thoſe ſpectacles of horror that are daily before them. Hence the fountain of tenderneſs and compaſſion is dried up, and no drop of pity falls on thoſe victims of calamity whom it is the indiſpenſible duty of thoſe where the power is veſted, to relieve and protect. It is only for perſons of deep reflection and quick ſenſibility, to pierce into ſuch miſeries as fall not within their own experience. The generality of mankind feel not for afflictions with which they themſelves are unacquainted, and human nature would be ſhockingly depraved indeed, if there was no collateral cauſe whereby to account for ſuch apparent barbarity; but the origin is obvious; it exiſts in the vicious formation of governments, which, loſing ſight of the primary object, have degenerated into the oppoſite extreme, and by habituating us to ſuch ſcenes, harden us againſt them. Where a perſon cannot walk the ſtreets of this metropolis without being ſtruck with ſcenes of horror,

horror, that harrow up the ſoul of ſenſibility; where every vice is carried to the moſt unnatural extravagant exceſs, the bold champion of abuſes inſults his readers, telling them it becomes them not to enquire, "that they are bound to venerate where they "cannot comprehend," and that the conſtitution under which they live, is the model of all perfection; yet this conſiſtent Patriot "is an enemy to extremes*." The fact is, all old governments tend to promote ſuch extremes. In thoſe that are the worſt conſtituted, this miſchief holds the moſt ſovereign ſway. Whoever has travelled through the Italian ſtates, muſt have been ſhocked with the oppoſite extremes of luxury and indigence. It is there, where poverty appears in the moſt hideous colours, at the ſame time that grandeur and magnificence ſhine with unrivalled ſplendour. The Princes and Lazaronis of Naples form a contraſt that diſgraces humanity. Where the ſyſtem of equality is beſt preſerved, we may ſafely pronounce, that the feweſt abuſes

* Vide The Appeal.

exiſt,

exiſt; but in all nations the evil is enormous. The welfare of ſociety requires no ſuch extremes; and, as we have before obſerved, gradations will be always kept up, independent of thoſe adventitious cauſes in which they at preſent conſiſt; but when ariſing from purer principles, cannot arrive to that dangerous exceſs which we have been accuſtomed to behold.

Rouſſeau traces up the greateſt part of the diſaſters, that afflict mankind, to the above ſource, and wiſely recommends laws for the prevention, as more neceſſary than for the puniſhment of crimes. Certainly the times loudly call for the experiment, notwithſtanding any clamours it might excite from the enemies to innovation. If laws were more impartial and humane, the people would improve from the example. Old governments may not unjuſtly be compared to old maids—peeviſh and fretful,—quarrelling with each other for ſtraws; obſtinate and implacable; cruel and avaricious, clinging to bad inveterate habits, which they have neither virtue or inclination

to

to reſiſt, and grown into ſuch a ſtate of corruption, as mortality alone can cure.

Theſe are general maxims, the reſult of experience and reflection, which, however weakly expreſſed, it muſt be ever labour in vain to attempt to controvert; Mr. Burke knows it alſo; but he may ſay with the poet,

———"Video meliora proboque;
Deteriora ſequor."

Nevertheleſs, the evils (however crying and numerous they may be) may not yet be arrived to ſuch a magnitude amongſt us, but that palliatives may be applied with effect. It is the ſure criterion of wiſdom, to guard againſt future diſaſters. Let our Government therefore profit from the example, and by a provident attention to the intereſts and liberties of the people,—by a regard and benevolence ſhewn to their wants,—by a timely redreſs of their grievances,—by a voluntary repeal of thoſe oppreſſive laws, that have crept into, but which are incompatible with the ſpirit of a conſtitution boaſting its freedom, and by an enlarged, equitable ſyſtem of reform,

form, in a ſeaſon of apparent ſatisfaction and tranquility, all the horrors may be avoided, which are inſeparable from the paroxyſms of a *provoked* Revolution.

Mr. Burke makes one principal merit of the Britiſh conſtitution, to conſiſt in its intricacy, in it being unintelligible to common underſtandings: "and that it is only men profoundly ſtudied* who can poſſibly comprehend its excellence." According to this maxim, the people may be driven like oxen, —yet may always find a panacea for the moſt oppreſſive grievances, in their own ignorance, and in the belief inculcated by their rulers, that it is unlawful to reſiſt the ſource of their miſery.

It would be exceeding the limits preſcribed to this publication, to enter largely into the internal evidence reſpecting the excellency of this government; yet, if external marks bear any weight, it is rather ſuſpicious. Are we to draw any concluſive proof of its perfection from a nation containing not more than ſeven millions of people,

* Vide The Appeal.

paying

paying more than ſeventeen million ſterling in taxes, to ſupport this ſo much boaſted government? Is it to be perceived in the deluſive mockery of our popular repreſentation? Is it to be diſcovered in the ſtill extenſive influence and enormous patronage of the crown, ever ſufficient to inſure, in the preſent ſtate of things, a corrupt majority of ſuffrages in parliament? Is it to be traced in the frequency and number of our capital executions, far ſurpaſſing all we at preſent hear or read of in any other country? Or, are we to look for its bleſſed effects in this metropolis, containing (we will ſay) about nine hundred thouſand inhabitants, where there are more priſoners confined for debt*, than are to be found through the whole continent of France, containing nearly thirty million?

* If it be political in a commercial country like this, that laws ſhould exiſt for the confinement of debtors, thoſe laws ſhould be equal and univerſal; but that legiſlators ſhould enact laws to exempt themſelves from their penalty, is a ſoleciſm too ſhocking and abſurd for minute diſcuſſion. The conſtituents delegate power in order to provide laws for the general ſecurity and protection; not that the delegates ſhould exalt themſelves beyond their reach.

Theſe may appear advantages to the comprehenſive genius and penetrating intuition of men "profoundly ſtudied," like Mr. Burke, but are not quite clear and ſatisfactory to perſons of common underſtanding.

Amongſt the other numberleſs abuſes that have been ſtated,—it is the iniquitous practice of the Engliſh Government, and indeed unhappily, of moſt others, to take money from one part of the nation, in order to bribe and corrupt the other; ſo, that the great maſs of the people are double ſufferers; paying in the firſt inſtance, far beyond the due proportion of their reſources, and eventually ſuffering infinitely more, through the venality and corruption of their Ariſtocratic Repreſentatives*.

Hence, amongſt us, Parliament is merely a trade, and the traffic is carried on with as little reſerve, as is uſed in a bargain for the

* A celebrated Ariſtocratic was daring enough to denominate the people of England, "*the ſcum of the earth*," and to declare, "that he had bought and would ſell them." For this language, the family has been rewarded with a peerage.

ſale

ſale of a horſe, or any other article, for which a man may have occaſion*.

Such are Mr. Burke's *Arts* of Government, which he appears to have taken from his great archetype, that *Incorrupt, Renowned, and Ancient Whig*, Sir R. Walpole.

All the evils that have been enumerated, are inconſiſtent with the original deſign and inſtitution of government, the greateſt of which ſhould be to reſtrain the human paſſions, ſo as to make them conducive to the general happineſs of ſociety; whereas it is the baſe policy of ſovereigns to inflame thoſe paſſions, and to create diſtinct intereſts amongſt their ſubjects.

Politics are thus profligate and ſelfiſh, becauſe not founded on the maxims of nature, experience, or public utility. The true principle of government, conſiſts in a firm adherence to the laws of nature, and an unalterable attachment to the eſſence and preſervation of the Social Union, originating from thoſe laws.

* Examples of this kind are too frequent and notorious to render the mention of any particular inſtance neceſſary.

Mankind, aſſembling together to live in ſociety, agreed on a pact which implied an obligation of reciprocal ſervices, and of refraining from all violence on the perſon or property of each other; but as the nature of man, unhappily, ever inclines him to ſeek the gratification of his appetites, and the indulgence of his momentary caprices, regardleſs of the intereſt of others, it became neceſſary to conſtitute a power of ſufficient force to bring him back to his duty, and to recall to his mind thoſe engagements that paſſion had obliterated.

This Power is the Law; the aggregate of the general will of ſociety, formed in order to fix a preciſe rule of conduct, for the members who compoſe it, and to have ſuch influence over their actions, as to render them the ſource of public benefit. Hence, as it is extremely difficult for a numerous ſociety peaceably to aſſemble and promulgate Laws, it has recourſe to the election of particular citizens, on whom its confidence devolves. They, from that period, become the interpreters of the general will;

will; the depoſitaries of the authority, eſſential to its execution. However, as they received their power from the people, and as it was eſtabliſhed ſolely with a view to their preſervation and happineſs, it is evident, (as we have before obſerved,) that they can revoke that power, when their intereſt requires it; alter the conſtitution of the government, and extend or circumſcribe the prerogative of their chiefs, over whom they maintain an inalienable juriſdiction, by the eternal laws of nature, which ordain, "that "a part ſhould be in ſubjection to the "whole."

Such is the origin of all governments, which, to be legitimate, muſt have the ſanction and free conſent of the people.

Thus, ſovereigns are the miniſters of a nation, the depoſitaries of a greater or leſſer degree of power, and not, according to Mr. Burke's doctrine, the abſolute maſters and proprietors of them. By a Convention, whether formally expreſſed, or indirectly underſtood, ſovereigns are bound to promote the general welfare. It is only on

ſuch conditions, that the people are bound to allegiance. No nation ever could, or would delegate to their chiefs an *irrevocable* authority over them. They would not do it on their own account; they could not barter the freedom and happineſs of poſterity; ſuch conceſſion is annulled by the unerring voice of nature, whoſe univerſal principle it is, " that man ſhould cultivate " his own felicity."

All laws are incompetent and unjuſt that have any other tendency than to promote the invariable general good of ſociety, and to ſecure thoſe advantages for which it was eſtabliſhed. Equity is the fundamental principle of government, which, by aid of impartial laws, operating equally on every claſs of citizens, prevents the evil conſequences that otherwiſe ariſe from the advantage, which a ſuperiority of phyſical or moral faculties, gives to one man over another.

The rights of man, in his ſocial ſtate, permit him to ſeek and promote his own welfare by all poſſible means, that are not injurious to that of others. Theſe rights

are evidentally limited by the nature of the contract. Government poſſeſſes a claim upon all its Members, in virtue of the benefits they derive from it; and every Citizen has claims upon Government or its Miniſters for thoſe bleſſings; for the ſecurity and protection of which it was eſtabliſhed, and for which purpoſe only, they had conſented to give up a certain portion of their natural liberty.

A government, whoſe chiefs and laws yield no advantage to its members, forfeits all right of power or command over them.

In departing from theſe eſſential truths, nations were enſlaved, and by their own imprudence, or by the chicane and violence of thoſe to whom they had delegated the truſt of enacting and executing laws, ſovereigns uſurped an abſolute dominion over them, impiouſly pretending to derive their authority from Heaven alone, and to raiſe themſelves above the influence of any earthly controul. By ſuch means, the nature of man was degraded, and the arbitrary will of the ſovereign became the law. The intereſt

of the commonwealth was ſacrificed to the private intereſt or capricicus paſſion of the monarch; the national force was employed againſt itſelf, and citizens abandoned their duty, to ſupport the deſpotiſm of their oppreſſors.

Thus, liberty, property, ſecurity, and virtue, were baniſhed from ſociety; politics degenerated into the baſe art of employing the public force and treaſures, in ſchemes of corruption, and the moſt profligate ambition.—Separate intereſts were created amongſt men, and their mutual diſſention ſerved only to confirm the ſtrength and increaſe the power of their tyrants, while the unhappy multitude ſeemed in love with the chains that had been impoſed upon them.

Mankind, when placed above all reſtraint, becomes intolerant. Fear is the only obſtacle that nations can interpoſe againſt the paſſions of their ſovereigns, who otherwiſe would employ the reſources they hold, independent of every other conſideration, but their own arbitrary inclinations.

To remedy this evil, it became neceſſary to limit the ſovereign power, and that the people ſhould reſerve a ſufficient portion of it to prevent the fatal effects, which wholly concentered in one point, would infallibly cruſh them. Beſides, it requires little reflection to perceive, that the burthen of adminiſtration, is far too heavy to be ſupported by any one man, that from the extent and multiplicity of its duties, he would become negligent; and from the extent of his authority, he would become haughty and tyrannical. In ſhort, the experience of all ages inconteſtibly proves, that man ever inclines to abuſe his power, and that a monarch is bound to act in obedience to the law, and not the law to the monarch.

The more we inveſtigate the ſlaviſh tenets that Mr. Burke ſtrives with all his zeal to enforce, the more diſguſting and odious do they appear.

The fallacy, however, of his Political Texts has been already ſufficiently expoſed; his Moral Text is no leſs vicious.

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He tells us, " that great diſtreſs never yet taught, and while the world laſts, that it never will teach, wiſe leſſons to any part of mankind *."—The exact inverſe propoſition is certainly the truth; for if adverſity does not chaſten and correct the mind, teaching the ſalutary leſſons of caution and foreſight,—if ſmarting under its wounds, it does not preſcribe the balm of prudence, as the beſt future preventive; it is difficult to diſcover in what other ſchool, experience and knowledge are to be acquired.

It is an undoubted conviction in the truth of this principle, that has completed the late revolution in France. The remembrance of recent ſufferings increaſes the national ardour againſt every meaſure that would tend to revive them, and muſt for ever prevent the return of that barbarous ſyſtem, which every good man muſt ſincerely deprecate and abhor.

Henry the Fourth, who with all his faults, was the beſt and greateſt monarch ſince the

* Vide Mr. Burke's laſt letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

days

days of Charlemagne, that ever reigned in France, paſſed the flower of his youth in the ſchool of adverſity.—His friend and miniſter, the Duke of Sully, went through the ſame ordeal.

Adverſity formed the mind of Mirabeau. It was from a dungeon in the caſtle of Vincennes that he finiſhed his admirable treatiſe on Lettres de Cachet, and on the State Priſons of France. It was the glimmering lamp of his diſmal cell, that kindled in his breaſt the ardent flame of liberty, and which inſpired thoſe ſublime projects that were afterwards put in practice, and proved fatal to the deſpotiſm, of which he himſelf had been for years, the languiſhing, miſerable victim.

In another of his moral texts, he gravely aſſerts, " *that the life of gypſies, beggars, and robbers is extremely pleaſant, and that the ſhifting tide of fear and hope—the flight and purſuit—the peril and eſcape of the thief is far more agreeable than the ſober

* Vide Mr. Burke's laſt letter to a Member of the National Aſſembly.

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tranquillity reſulting from the effects of honeſt labour."

Fortunately for ſociety, on theſe occaſions, men judge for themſelves: ſo that Mr. Burke is not capable of infuſing the poiſon of ſuch ſentiments into others; for that mind muſt be viciouſly conſtituted indeed, which could delight in a ſtate of conſtant anxiety, alarm, and danger.

It has been my endeavour in the preceding ſheets, to expoſe the moral errors and political wanderings of one who had been formerly diſtinguiſhed for his moral virtues and political integrity, whoſe ſingle opinions, when on the wrong bias, are more productive of miſchief, than thoſe of a whole hoſt of ſelfiſh, diſappointed courtiers. The cauſe of Liberty and Truth is the ſame;—no ſplendour of genius;—no charms of eloquence are wanting to emblazen its native merits: it ſtands on its own ground, firm and immovable. Sophiſtry may pervert, but cannot alter, its nature. It is the art, and it forms a malignant ſatisfaction in the breaſt of princes, to undermine the conſiſtency

ency of virtuous patriotiſm. One proſelyte of this deſcription, gained from the popular intereſt, ſerves more to ſtrengthen their power, and to gratify their pride, than all the ſupport they can receive from that combination of corrupt auxiliaries which, in general, ſurround a throne. Nevertheleſs, the opinions of any perſon loſe their influence, when the origin of ſuch opinions is diſcovered to be vicious.

If, however, notwithſtanding all that has been ſaid, it ſhould appear that Mr. Burke's change of ſentiment was purely the reſult of ſober deliberate reflection,—that he retires from the buſtle of politics and the fatigues of public life to devote himſelf, with more uninterrupted tranquillity, to the purſuits of philoſophy and ſcience? or to enjoy in ſocial retirement, the delights of domeſtic felicity, that he has reſiſted the allurements of a court, and withſtood the temptations of a falſe and vain ambition;—that he retires untitled, unpenſioned,—free and independent.—In that caſe, however, we may lament the irreconcileable

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contradiction in his ſentiments; yet there will be no poſitive ground of impeachment, as to the venality or corruption of his heart.

But if we ſhall hereafter behold him decorated with titles, and rewarded by penſions, the univerſal philanthropiſt, the friend and benefactor of mankind, degenerated into the tool and ſycophant of a court: then we may no longer heſitate to decide on his conduct;—it will ſpeak for itſelf; nor ſhould we ever ceaſe to hold up to general execration, ſuch a diſguſting picture of matchleſs, undiſguiſed apoſtacy. It is not his pomp of words or pedant diſſertations, that can then reſtore his fame and character. They will be irretrievably loſt, "and that which "ſhould, and which would have accompa-"nied his old age, as honour, love, atten-"tion, troops of friends, all that could have "made his latter days moſt happy and ho-"nourable, he muſt not look to have *;" but in their ſtead, the public ſcorn and

* Macbeth.

hatred

hatred will purſue him; and for the loſs of all thoſe enjoyments, he will find his only laſt reſources in the vanity of a title, and the infamy of a proſtituted penſion *. Then the former demagogue of the people will turn his back upon them, and in an affected air of inſolent triumph, exclaim,

——Populus me ſibilat, at mihi plaudo.

If, as it has been ſurmiſed, from a vicious ſympathy, the crowned deſpots of Europe, contrary to the law of nations, and the firſt principle of natural equity, are actually arming in what they imagine to be the cauſe of this wretched king; may their diſgrace and diſappointment be adequate to the profligacy of the attempt! and may it impreſs on their minds, the wiſe and ſalutary leſſon, "that the force of ty-"rants conſiſts only in the patience of "the people!" but in whatever deſperate enterprize, the other powers of Europe

* Should theſe hypotheſes be verified, it will afford another memorable proof how the public money is employed, and clearly point out the eaſieſt road to favour and diſtinction, at the immaculating court of George III.

may

may involve themſelves, I truſt it never will be a blot in the annals of this country,—that it never may be recorded, that the force of England was employed to reſtore the throne of deſpotiſm; and may the aſſembly of reviſion, which the French legiſlature has decreed, whenever it may meet for the purpoſe of reforming, or repealing ſuch laws as ſhall have been found hurtful to the happineſs and intereſts of the people; may they never depart from the immortal principles on which their conſtitution is founded: may the bleſſings of liberty eventually prove the fulleſt refutation of that vile calumny and injuſtice, which its enemies have dared to practiſe; and may the future proſperity of France be an example to remoteſt ages, and ſerve as an eternal barrier againſt the encroachments of tyranny and ambition!

FINIS.